

Hello and good afternoon,

Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee.

My name is Marcus Korcz, I am a current UConn School of Social Work graduate student, and resident of Southington. I am here today in support of House Bill 6578, An Act Restoring Electoral Privileges to Convicted Felons who are on parole. I speak on this issue today not only as a citizen, but as an individual that has worked in Corrections for over six-years, witnessing firsthand the failure of our criminal justice system in fostering rehabilitation, supporting reintegration, and preventing recidivism. Beyond my personal experience a study conducted at the University of Pittsburgh found evidence that individuals that had assistance with restoring their voting rights and voting registration had increased trust in the government and criminal justice system, as well as reported an increased willingness to cooperate with law enforcement (V., Shineman, Restoring Rights, Restoring Trust: Evidence that Reversing Felon Disenfranchisement Penalties Increases Both Trust and Cooperation with Government).

Voting not only lays at the core of American values, the right to self-determination and the right to a voice in government, but serves as the fundamental act of civic duty, voting isn't just our right, it's our responsibility.

We grant individuals parole to provide them with a supervised, structured, and supportive mechanism so that they can most successfully reintegrate back into society. We expect them to stay out of legal trouble, obtain housing, get a job, and pay taxes. We expect them to be productive members of our communities. Yet, we deny them the most fundamental of American rights, and the most sacred of civic duties, the act of voting. We hold individuals on parole to all these expectations and expect them to be citizens yet deny them the fundamental rights of citizenship.

By passing this bill, Connecticut will be taking a step forward in joining the nineteen other states and the District of Columbia, including the rest of New England, that have restored parole voting rights, regardless of if their fees are paid in full, restoring a basic tenet of democracy, ensuring that all of us have a voice in our government and representation. Lastly, I urge you to support this bill, because without it, further harm and injustice will come to communities of color in, where 1 in 16 black American's can't vote due to felony disenfranchisement laws compared to 1 in 59 non-black Americans (<https://www.commoncause.org/connecticut/resource/restoration-of-voting-rights-to-individuals-on-parole/>)

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the committee today in support of H.B. 6578, a bill which would restore voting rights that rightfully belong to all citizens of Connecticut.

Marcus Korcz (He/Him)

Town of Southington, [Marcus.Korcz@uconn.edu](mailto:Marcus.Korcz@uconn.edu)